

## [Here We Can Be Glad #4]

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Julia M. Sample

Subject: Living Lore

HERE WE CAN BE GLAD New Hampshire

### Chapter 4

It is Saturday morning, the last of June. A cool breeze is blowing, the sun is not too bright and many people hope It will not rain. For this is Katherine's and Jan's wedding day. Early that morning the old lady, who runs the house, starts preparing Katherine for this gala and important occasion. Water has been heated on the wood stove and carried to the bath-room. Everyone in the house knows that for the next two hours the bath-room is Katherine's. The old lady scrubs her vigorously. Never having had her back so thoroughly washed she is sure the skin will be off. Tears come to her eyes, "Jan, no like, me red, Jan like white, all white." The old lady assures her, "Be more white by and by, you wait." Her hair is given the same strenuous treatment. Then the old lady brings forth a bottle of sweet oil from Poland. This she rubs into Katherine's young smooth skin. Katherine is glad once more, "Smell good, nice." Her hair, sweetly clean, lay in shining braids about her head. Now she is led into the bed-room, her clothes are all neatly arranged on the bed she has shared for so long with another girl. Tonight she will be in another room, to-night she will sleep in another bed, not with a girl but with Jan. She glances secretly into the mirror, to see how she likes this idea. But she forgets the thought in her surprise. Could this be the young girl so lately come to America? This is a woman, in white and wearing a wedding

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veil! This is what she has made--- this woman. She runs her hands over her body and smiles. This whiteness she has bought. Her parents so far away and poor do not help. Katherine pays for the wedding, that 2 is the custom. Carefully she has saved, first to pay for the announcement by the priest, then to pay for / the ceremony. At the thought of the hall, the music, the food and the drinks, she nods proudly, "Me buy everything, make everybody glad, good time." The old lady calls, "Come , it is time!" Quickly gathering her bouquet of flowers she runs down the stairs.

The church looks beautiful. It takes one hour and a half to make Katherine and Jan wife and husband. The ceremony over they leave for their home, their one room. At the last moment some one steals Katherine's veil and that is too bad. For now they will have to pay a forfeit, whatever the 'thief' asks, perhaps a keg of beer or a case of liquor! Jan reassures her and says he will get it back. As they reach the door of the church she gayly throws her bouquet for the next bride to catch.

Reaching the house the old lady serves them the traditional salt, bread and wine. A bit of each, salt for economic prosperity, bread for the necessities of life and wine for health. They then breakfast alone, neither one eating much of the meat and bread, coffee they did manage to swallow. They must not take too long for everyone will be waiting for them at the hall and they still have to change their clothes. Katherine into a pretty blue dress and Jan into the suit he wears to / church and organization meetings. Laughing Jan runs her up the stairs into their room, their new home. He shuts the door, "Take it off" he demands. Katherine wordless but confident removes her whiteness, only to reveal more whiteness. Jan gloats over her fresh loveliness and is satisfied to cover her with kisses. Katherine sees he will wait, he will find enjoyment all day in anticipation.

Entering the hall, they are greeted with, "The bride, the groom." They have a round of brandy neat and a chaser of beer. Then to the 3 tables. There is Polish ham and sausage and pork, Polish bread and pastries, pickles and beer and liquor, plenty of everything. All morning and afternoon they eat and drink, sing songs and dance. First Katherine

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had to dance with Jan then, Thaddeus, her cousin, always her people first. Then with Jan's people and after that with anyone inviting her. Along about mid-afternoon the songs become ribald and Katherine wonders what story the old lady's man will tell next and what the old lady herself will do. All the guests are bright-eyed, very affectionate, few stagger, very few.

Seven is the hour for a respite for the bride and groom. They again go home and change their clothes. Jan dons once more his wedding suit and Katherine her gown. But first Jan calls to her, "Here, undo the coat." She willingly complies and there under the coat and stuffed partway in the sleeve is her veil. "Oh, Jan, my man smart, Ver' smart." Jan is much pleased with himself and her. He again takes delight in caressing her and Katherine realizes as never before how strong Jan is. He says what he thought the first time he saw her, "Plenty room for baby, plenty."

They are back in the hall again. Many of the guests have availed themselves of the respite too. Most of them look freshened and ready to carry on. The tables have been replenished, glass glasses restored to some order. Now Katherine removes her slipper and it is passed among the guests. Money is placed in the slipper, when filled it is emptied into her lap. Again and again it is emptied and passed amid much laughter and many pointed jokes. However she knows this money will far from cover the expense of the wedding.

Now the dancing begins in earnest. Between they sing and eat and all the time they drink. It seems impossible they have been doing this 4 since early morning. At one A.M. the party breaks. At last Katherine and Jan are free. Free to go to their room, free to enjoy each other. Even Katherine Katherine's fine vitality is diminished and she throws her tired body on the bed. All day long they have waited for this. Katherine looks at Jan and sees him striding towards her. She is glad! Willingly she gives herself to him, even as she has promised this morning in church. She smiles, "Yesterday, not to-day."